Amendments to the Claims:

      This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

      1.   (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

receiving a request to access a network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein licenses to access said network resource are distributed to each respective said servers and wherein a total of said licenses distributed to said servers corresponds to a maximum limit of allowed licensed connections to said network resource;

      determining whether granting the requested access to the network resource provides a number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit;

      granting the requested access to the network resource if it is determined that the granting of the requested access provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit; and

      ~~using~~ load balancing according to license availability by ~~to~~ directing said granted requested access to one of said servers having at least one of its said respective licenses available for said requested access.

      2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said network resource includes an application available from each of said servers.

      3.   (Canceled)

      4.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said licenses distributed to said servers include licenses allocated to a plurality of said mail servers based on usernames assigned to said mail servers.

5.   (Canceled)

6.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said licenses distributed to said servers include license allocated to said mail servers based on geographic information associated with users that request access to the network resource.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising keeping at least one of a local log or syslog to track information associated with licensed connections to the network resource.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising providing third-party access to at least one of the local log or syslog to allow licenses associated with the tracked information stored therein to be remotely managed or monitored.

9.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a warning message if a threshold limit, of a number of licensed connections less than said maximum limit of licensed connections, is getting near reached.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein associated maximum limits of allowed licensed connections, of a plurality of network resources, are arranged according to a parent/child arrangement.

11.   (Canceled)

12.   (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:
        a means for storing a maximum limit of allowed licensed data that specifies a number of paid permitted connections to at least one network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein licenses to access said number of said paid permitted connections to said at least one network resource are distributed to each respective is allocated amongst said

3

servers ~~and wherein a total of said licenses distributed to said servers corresponds to said maximum limit~~; and

~~a means for receiving a request to access the network resource; and~~

a means ~~for determining whether granting the requested access to the at least one network resource provides a number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit, and~~ for ~~granting the requested access to the at least one network resource if it is determined that the granting of the requested access provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit, and further~~ for ~~using~~ load balancing according to said number of paid permitted connections by directing ~~to direct said granted requested~~ a request ~~access~~ to one of said servers having at least one of its said ~~respective licenses~~ paid permitted connections available ~~for said requested access~~ to serve said request.

13.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 12 wherein the means for storing said ~~maximum limit of allowed licensed~~ data that specifies the number of paid permitted connections to the at least one network resource ~~sets~~ stores ~~a maximum limit of allowed licensed~~ data that specifies a number of paid permitted connections to an application available from said plurality of servers.

14.   (Canceled)

15.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 12 wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said ~~licenses distributed~~ number of paid permitted connections allocated to said servers include ~~licenses~~ paid permitted connections allocated to a plurality of said mail servers based on usernames assigned to said mail servers.

16.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 12, further comprising:

a means for tracking information associated with ~~licensed~~ paid permitted connections to the network resource; and

a means for providing access to the tracked information.

17.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 12, further comprising a means for warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a ~~said~~ maximum limit of ~~licensed~~ paid permitted connections, is ~~being at least approached~~ reached.

18 - 36.   (Canceled)

37.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

~~a file adapted to store a maximum limit of allowed licensed connections to at least one network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein licenses to access said at least one network resource are distributed to each respective said servers and wherein a total of said licenses distributed to said servers corresponds to said maximum limit; and~~

a network device ~~that includes said file, and being adapted to determine whether granting a requested access to the at least one network resource provides a number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit and adapted to grant the requested access to the at least one network resource if the granting of the requested access provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit, and further adapted to use~~ adapted to load ~~balancing~~ balance traffic amongst a plurality of servers according to a number of paid permitted connections to a network resource available through said plurality of servers~~to direct said granted requested access to one of said servers having at least one of its said respective licenses available for said requested access~~.

38.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said network device is a switch adapted to direct ~~said requested~~ a request to access said network resource to ~~said~~ one of said servers, which are communicatively coupled to said switch.

39.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said plurality of servers include email servers.

40.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 37, further comprising a data repository, included in said network device and accessible by said network device, to store log

information usable by said network device to determine ~~license~~ usage of, and ~~license~~ compliance with an agreement pertaining to, said paid permitted connections.

41.   (Canceled)

42.   (Previously Presented) An article of manufacture, comprising:

a storage medium storing instructions that are executable by a network device to:

~~record~~ determine a number of ~~licensed~~ paid permitted connections to at least one network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein ~~licenses to access~~ said number of paid permitted connections to said at least one network resource ~~are~~ is distributed ~~to each respective~~ amongst said servers ~~and wherein a total of said licenses distributed to said servers corresponds to a maximum limit of allowed licensed connections to said network resource~~;

~~determine whether granting a requested access to the at least one network resource provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit;~~

~~grant the requested access to the at least one network resource if it is determined that the granting of the requested access provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit~~; and

~~use~~ load ~~balancing~~ balance traffic amongst said plurality of servers according to said number of paid permitted connections ~~to direct said granted requested access to one of said servers having at least one of its said respective licenses available for said requested access~~.

43.   (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 42 wherein said ~~at least one resource is~~ plurality of servers include an email server.

44.   (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 42 wherein said instructions executable by said network device to determine ~~whether granting said requested access to the at least one network resource provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit,~~ includes instructions executable by said network device to:

access a data repository adapted to store log information, including data that specifies said ~~recorded~~ number of ~~licensed~~ paid permitted connections; and

use said log information to determine ~~license~~ usage of, and ~~license~~ compliance with an agreement pertaining to, said paid permitted connections.

45.   (Canceled)

46.   (New) The article of manufacture of claim 42 wherein the storage medium further includes instructions that are executable by said network device to:

provide a warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a maximum limit of paid permitted connections, is reached.

47.   (New) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said network device is further adapted to provide a warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a maximum limit of paid permitted connections, is reached.